November 9, 2010

The Honorable Harry Reid  
Senate Majority Leader 
United States Senate 
Capitol Building, S-221 
Washington, DC 20510-7020  
Fax 202 224-7362

Dear Senator Reid:

As you return to finish the work of the 111th Congress and the Fiscal Year (FY) 2011 appropriations process, Congress must renew and expand its commitment to the nation’s investment in science, technology, and innovation. Federal science research and development (R&D), leveraged through agencies like the National Science Foundation (NSF) and Department of Energy Office of Science (DOE SC), is the foundation of America’s competitive edge in science, technology, and innovation, and it underpins the ability of this nation to remain a global power.

We therefore urge you to reauthorize the America COMPETES Act, which Congress first passed in 2007, before it expires at the end of the year. In addition, we strongly encourage Congress to keep the essential science agencies – including the NSF and DOE SC – on a doubling track from FY 2011 through FY 2017 as prescribed in the America COMPETES Act of 2007.

Federal R&D is the key to a lasting economic recovery and sustained growth. Investments in federal R&D have historically provided significant returns, and federal R&D has played a critical role in the development of countless game-changing technologies. In the 1990s, the growth in GDP attributable to fledgling information technology industries accounted for one-third to one-half of national economic growth. R&D offers the best, and perhaps only, hope for opening the door on a new set of technologies that will jump start the economy for the next decade and create high quality American jobs.

This country faces the most competitive global arena in history, and the evidence suggests that the United States is falling behind in education, science, and innovation. In a National Academies report released last month titled, “Rising Above the Gathering Storm, Revisited: Rapidly Approaching Category 5,” the authors conclude that the nation’s competitive outlook has worsened since 2005. Moreover, they describe how other nations have been markedly progressing, thereby affecting America's relative ability to compete for new factories, research laboratories, and jobs.
We understand that Congress has difficult decisions to make in a tight fiscal climate, when deficit reduction is on the mind, but federal R&D must remain a priority even in tough times. The nation and our economy will pay dearly in the future if we do not prioritize science and technology today.

Thank you very much for your attention to this critical issue.

Sincerely,

Roger M. Wakimoto
National Center for Atmospheric Research

Richard A. Anthes
University Corp. for Atmospheric Research

Ernest M. Agee
Purdue University

Brian Ancell
Texas Tech University

James R. Anderson
Arizona State University

Viney Pal Aneja
North Carolina State University

Meg Austin
University Corp. for Atmospheric Research

Sukanta Basu
North Carolina State University

Eric A. Betterton
University of Arizona

Frederick H. Carr
University of Oklahoma

John Chiang
University of California, Berkeley
Gretchen Mullendore
University of North Dakota

Noboru Nakamura
University of Chicago

Gary K. Ostrander
University of Hawaii at Manoa

Thomas N. Parks
University of Utah

Kevin Perry
University of Utah

Donald J. Perkey
University of Alabama in Huntsville

Michael R. Poellot
University of North Dakota

Sharron Quisenberry
Iowa State University

Bernhard Rappenglueck
University of Houston

Alan Robock
Rutgers University

Lynn M. Russell
Scripps Institution of Oceanography

Roger M. Samelson
Oregon State University

Thomas A. Schroeder
University of Hawaii

Karen M. Shell
Oregon State University
Joseph A. Zehnder
Creighton University

Charles Zender
University of California, Irvine

Sharon Zhong
Michigan State University

Paquita Zuidema
University of Miami, Rosenstiel School

c: Senator Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader
Senator John D. Rockefeller, IV, Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation
Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Transportation
Senator Barbara Mikulski, Chair, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science & RA
Senator Richard C. Shelby, Ranking Member, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science & RA
Full Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science & RA
Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi, House Speaker
Congressman John Boehner, House Minority Leader
Congressman Bart Gordon, Chair, House Committee on Science and Technology
Congressman Ralph M. Hall, Ranking Member, House Committee on Science and Technology
Congressman Alan Mollohan, Chair, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science & RA
Congressman Frank Wolf, Ranking Member, House Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science & RA